

### Leadership Remarks



**Jacqueline Davis-Slay**

Acting Director

USDA Office of Partnerships and Public Engagement (OPPE)

In 2019, Mrs. Jacqueline A. Davis-Slay assumed the position of Deputy Director for the Office of Partnerships and Public Engagement (OPPE). The office was established to rapidly expand outreach to America's agricultural community and facilitate greater access to USDA programs.

In addition, OPPE serves as the lead agent for USDA partnership and outreach activities with tasking and reporting authority to direct, coordinate and control all target programs. She has over 20 years of Federal service with experience in legislative and policy development, statistical analysis, fiscal and program management, service delivery and marketing, with a particular interest in developing innovative partnerships and opportunities to assist vulnerable communities, populations, and socially disadvantaged, beginning and limited resource producers. Prior to OPPE, Mrs. Davis-Slay served as Director for the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) Office of Public and Private Partnerships. This office provides vision, expertise, and leadership to build NRCS' public-private partnership program to advance conservation activities through strategic coordination and planning with other USDA agencies, customers, stakeholders and agricultural industries. She also held the positions of USDA Senior Policy Advisor for the StrikeForce for Rural Growth and Opportunity Initiative and Legislative Director for the Rural Development mission area, providing legislative guidance and direction for over 42 programs in three agencies. In 2009, she served as Legislative Specialist for USDA's Office of Congressional Relationship where she was one the primary liaison between the United States Congress and USDA. She spent most of her career with NRCS, serving in a multitude of positions, such as Legislative Affairs Branch Chief, Acting State Conservationist, Program Manager, Program Analyst and Special Assistant.

A native of Port Gibson, MS, Mrs. Davis-Slay attained her undergraduate and graduate degrees from Alcorn State University in Agricultural Economics. She is married to Denmark V. Slay and the mother of one son, Denmark V. Slay, II.

## Panel 1 – Innovative Partnerships Between State/Local Partners to Support Resilient Food Systems



**Dr. Dawn Baldwin Gibson PhD**  
Executive Pastor  
Peletah Ministries

Dr. Dawn Baldwin Gibson is the Executive Pastor of Peletah Ministries. She and her husband, Pastor Anthony Gibson co-founded in 2011. She is executive pastor. She also serves as Superintendent of Peletah Academic Center for Excellence, a culturally competent trauma informed school. ([www.peletahministries.com](http://www.peletahministries.com))

She completed her Bachelor of Arts in Liberal Studies with a concentration in English, Sociology, and Criminal Justice from Shaw University and her Master of Arts in English with a concentration in Technical and Professional Communications. She has completed higher education administration doctoral coursework at George Washington University and Nova Southeastern University. She earned her doctorate in Christian Counseling at Christian Leadership University with an emphasis on working with children of color experiencing complex and racial trauma.

Dr. Dawn established the Joseph Community Farmers Market which has now been gifted to Peletah Academic Center for Excellence to become student managed. The market was recognized at the state and national levels for its work in underserved communities. Peletah Ministries has fed more than 250,000 people through its partnership with the Food Bank of Central and Eastern North Carolina. She has authored and/or assisted with grants for nearly 2 million dollars for community resiliency and Hurricane Relief/Recovery programs including U.S. Department of Agriculture, School to Work, Blue Cross/Blue Shields, WalMart, Food Lion, Dollar General and many more.

Dr. Dawn served as the chairperson of the Emotional and Spiritual Care Task Force for the North Carolina Voluntary Organizations Active in Disasters (VOAD). She published her first book entitled, *A Place Called Home*, which chronicles nearly 200 years of her family's history in Eastern NC. Her awards include being the 2017 NAACP Craven County Woman of the Year, 2016 Wonder Woman Recognition, 1 in 5 women in New Bern Making History- Sun Journal Newspaper Publication: MY New Bern Magazine and 2015 NAACP Craven County Humanitarian Award.

Dr. Dawn is the wife of Pastor Anthony Gibson. The mother of three children Spencer (Malika), Kaitlyn, and Hannah (deceased). She is the grandmother of Phillip and Isaac.



**Sydney Daigle**  
Director, Prince George's County Food Equity Council  
Program Manager, Institute for Public Health Innovation

As a Program Manager for IPHI, Sydney oversees implementation and outreach for the HEAL Cities & Town Campaign and the Prince George's County Food Equity Council (FEC). Sydney works with the Campaign's Program & Communications Consultant to

recruit new municipalities in addition to supporting current HEAL Cities and Towns while they adopt, implement, and promote HEAL policies and practices. For the past six years, Sydney has worked with the FEC, a local independent food policy council of twenty-two diverse members. FEC advances county and state-level food and agriculture policies to promote public health, environmental sustainability, and sound economic development in the local food system.

Sydney is passionate about strengthening local food systems and improving under-served communities' access to healthy foods. She has over eight years of professional experience working on systems-level public health interventions and local food and farm advocacy. Prior to working with IPHI, she served as the South Carolina Department of Education's Farm to School & Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program Coordinator and as the Sustainability Coordinator at St. Francis Hospital in Greenville, South Carolina. She has worked successfully with diverse audiences ranging from school cafeteria staff to policy makers to affect change at the institutional, county, and state-levels.

Sydney is active in her local civic association and sits on multiple advisory committees. In Prince George's County, she serves as a team leader for Prince George's County's Collaborative for Health Equity, Healthy and Safe Food Truck Committee, and Health Department Health Action Coalition's HEAL Workgroup. Sydney can be reached at [sdaigle@institutephi.org](mailto:sdaigle@institutephi.org) or 240-253-1036.



**Christopher Bradshaw**  
Executive Director  
Dreaming Out Loud

Christopher Bradshaw is an African American social justice entrepreneur whose expertise is using social innovation through the food system to grow meaningful community economic development within marginalized communities. Bradshaw has been named a 2015 Ashoka-American Express Emerging Innovator, one of Food Trust's 20 Leaders Under 40, and the longest-serving member of the DC Food Policy Council where he co-chairs the Urban Agriculture working group. Under his leadership, Dreaming Out Loud has grown to a \$1.4M social enterprise with 13 full-time staff members, and 4 seasonal farm and food hub assistants. He is a frequent speaker on the intersections of racial justice, class, gender, and food sovereignty — his appearances include the Atlantic Ideas Festival, Bloomberg American Health Summit; and both regional and national gatherings for farmers and food activists. Christopher is also the recipient of the John Thompson Legacy of a Dream Award for 2021, presented by Georgetown University.



**Livia Marqués**  
Co-founder and Coordinator  
Justice Through Food

Livia Marqués is the Co-Founder and Coordinator of Justice through Food, a national cooperative of BIPOC led organizations working towards racial, social, economic and environmental justice by building collective power through community food sovereignty. She is also founding principal of Food Driven Strategies, where she provides guidance

and consultation to develop and implement equitable programs and funding strategies through a food democracy framework that catalyzes systemic change. She brings over 20 years of experience and technical expertise in promoting equitable, fair, sustainable, and economically viable local and regional food systems. By working directly with producers and communities across the country in urban and rural areas, Marqués brings a unique skill set based on her diverse experience in the regenerative food and agriculture sector, the federal government, non-profit sector, and philanthropy. She served in multiple positions at the U.S. Department of Agriculture, from District to State Conservationist and National Plant Materials Specialist for the Natural Resources Conservation Service. Marqués was Founding Director of the People’s Garden Initiative at the U.S. Department of Agriculture where she led this international effort to promote community-based agriculture. She also created “Share Your Harvest” a national campaign that in one year resulted in the donation of 1.2 million pounds of fresh produce to families in need.

Prior to Food Driven Strategies, Marqués served as a national program officer for the W.K. Kellogg Foundation, where she developed the Transnational Food Sovereignty investment strategy and managed a \$30M portfolio. An accomplished public advocate and passionate spokesperson, Marqués is the recipient of the President’s Volunteer Service Award, a finalist for the Samuel J. Heyman Service to America Medal for Citizen Services, and the Outstanding Alumnus of the College of Agriculture & Life Sciences at North Carolina State University.

### Federal Subject Matter Experts



**Jennifer Sass**

[Asset Risk Management Specialist](#)  
[Community Facilities, USDA Rural Development](#)

Jennifer Sass serves as the Asset Risk Management Specialist on the Community Facilities Program Delivery team for USDA Rural Development. Prior to this position with the National Office, she was the Community Program Specialist for the North Carolina State Office and oversaw the administration of the Community Facilities Program in NC. She has been with USDA-Rural Development for 31 years. During this time, she served in the legacy agency, Farmer’s Home Administration, Farmer Programs, and later with Rural Development in the Single-Family Housing, Multi-Family Housing, and Water and Environmental Programs. She is a native of North Carolina. She and her husband, Paul, have 3 adult daughters, 2 sons and 10 grandchildren.



**Brenda Stuart-Luke**

[Internal Revenue Service Tax Specialist](#)  
[Communications & Liaison, Internal Revenue Service](#)

Brenda is an IRS veteran with 38 years of experience. During her tenure with the IRS she has worked in various Business Units such as, Human Resources, Criminal Investigation, Collection Enforcement, Taxpayer Assistance Manager, and New York Acting Area Manager for Stakeholder Liaison. Brenda currently works as Senior Stakeholder Liaison in the Small Business/Self Employed Business Operating Unit.

As a Stakeholder Liaison she participates, coordinates and shares IRS key messages through outreach with Government Agencies, Trade and Industrial Organizations, Chambers of Commerce, Tax Professional organizations and other business organization. As a Stakeholder her role is to collaborate with tax professional organizations, small business groups and industry associations. Brenda is the New York Lead for the IRS Limited English program. Brenda has received several awards and recognition for her dedication and Community Service from Congressional Offices, Chambers of Commerce, Senators, Civic group, Community based organization, Multi-Lingual organizations and various Professional Woman organizations. Brenda is married with two children and 1 grandson. Brenda is a people person, a mentor, and the President of an IRS Employee Organizations. She also enjoys meeting new people and learning about their culture and lifestyles.



**Daniel E. Gogal**  
Senior Environmental Protection Specialist  
Office of Environmental Justice  
U.S. Environmental Protection Agency

Mr. Gogal is an Environmental Protection Specialist with the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), Office of Environmental Justice (OEJ), where he has served since June 1992. Mr. Gogal has a public policy, environmental policy, and public administration background. He serves on OEJ's Community Support and Engagement Team and coordinates the Interagency Interfaith Collaboration for Vulnerable Communities group to advance multi-stakeholder collaborative partnerships. He is the Tribal and Indigenous Peoples Program Manager for the office and has been working on tribal and indigenous peoples environmental/public health issues and policy for over 32 years, starting with his internship at EPA in 1987. Mr. Gogal is also serving as EPA's staff lead for international human rights agreements, and, over the past 29 years, has worked in various other capacities for the Agency's environmental justice program. In addition, Mr. Gogal and his wife enjoy the experiences and dynamics of raising six children.

### Event Producer and Moderator



**Alex Córdoba**  
Community Development Specialist  
Program Lead, Center for Faith Based and Neighborhood Partnerships

Alex brings over ten years of experience in the agricultural development sector in both the United States and abroad. As Program Lead for the USDA Center for Faith Based and Neighborhood Partnerships, Alex leads secretarial and departmental initiatives with an emphasis on community economic development, public private partnerships, and food security. He also serves on the Management Team of the Local and Regional Food Systems Working Group, as well as the USDA advisory committee of the Office of Urban Agriculture and Innovative Production (OUAIP). Alex joined USDA in 2016 as a Presidential Management Fellow with the Natural Resources Conservation Service and has also spent time as a Strategic Engagement Specialist and Promise Zone Desk Officer with USDA Rural Development. He holds a bachelor's degree in Sociology, and Religious Studies, with a minor in American Ethnic Studies, from Willamette University in Salem, OR, and a Master's in Public Administration from the Cornell Institute for Public Affairs with a concentration in public and nonprofit management.